

The Wrath of God

Introduction

When Jenni asked me yesterday what my sermon was going to be, I told her “The Wrath of God.” She said, “Well, aren’t you Little Miss Sunshine!”

I get it. The thought that nice people we know might someday go to eternal hell is so overwhelming, and so disheartening, that we would rather not think about it at all.

Yet two facts stare us in the face:

1. The Bible says more about God’s wrath than about His love.
2. Jesus spoke more about hell than about heaven.

But many preachers either ignore the Bible teaching about God’s wrath, or they apologize for preaching on such a negative subject. Others try to minimize God’s wrath by arguing that it’s actually a part of His love.

One preacher wrote this about preaching on the wrath of God:

I must admit...that I hesitated to deal with this topic. But now that I have, I’ve learned a lot. It was not as difficult or nerve-racking as I thought it would be. So let’s get started on this study and see if I can do it without scaring or scarring people. - James M. Arlandson
<https://bible.org/article/wrath-god-new-testament-never-against-his-new-covenant-community>

When you’re done reading with me from the Word of God this morning, if you have sin in your life that you have not repented of, I want you to be scared. I want the Word of God to cut into and leave deep scars on your heart. I want you to see how terrifying it is to fall into the hands of the living God. I want you to take sin seriously and repent. And I want you to carry that fear of God’s wrath with you all the way until you die.

Here are three plain Bible teachings:

1. God expects you to tremble at His Word.
2. God expects you to fear Him and offer up to Him a heart filled with reverence and awe, because He is a consuming fire if you don’t.
3. God expects you to honor Him and thank Him in your worship, because He has given you an escape from the terrible condemnation and punishment you deserve.

Until we understand the severity of God’s wrath, nothing we offer Him can possibly please Him.

And why is that so? Because until we understand the terrible punishment that we deserve for our sins, **we can’t possibly be thankful enough** for the solution He has given us through His Son Jesus.

I. No one can know the true grace and mercy of God who does not FIRST understand the wrath of God.

Psalms 90:11 – “Who knows the power of your anger? For your WRATH is as great as the fear that is due you.”

Romans 11:22 – “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God.”

II. So what is God's wrath? What does wrath mean?

It is never like us losing our temper.

God doesn't flare up with anger and throw an unsuspecting, nearby angel across the universe before He can think straight. "Oh sorry, I lost my temper! I reacted without thinking!" And the angel is like, "There He goes again!"

1. **God is "slow to anger"** Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Psa 103:8
 - a. **Exodus 34:6** "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"
 - b. **Nahum 1:3** "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power; the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished."
2. **Psalms 6:1** – "O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your **hot displeasure.**"
 - a. God gets heated in anger against sin (His hot displeasure), but in His mercy He holds back His wrath.
 - b. Demonstrated to the generation of Noah's day. He longed to spare corrupt Sodom.

So what is God's wrath?

1. It is His settled determination to punish all sin, unrighteousness, injustice, and rebellion.
2. It is His hatred of all that is unholy. His holiness cannot coexist with sin in any form.
3. It is His righteous indignation at all that is unrighteous.
4. It is the execution of His justice in punishing all injustice.

III. In Romans the gospel begins with, and remains focused on, God's wrath.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 2:5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Romans 2:8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness— indignation and wrath,

Romans 3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?* (I speak as a man.)

Romans 4:15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

Romans 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

Romans 9:22 *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

IV. Paul's point in Romans is that without Christ no one can stand before God's coming wrath.

Eternal destruction away from God 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (ESV) ⁷and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer **the punishment of eternal destruction, away from [£] the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of his might,

Torment forever Revelation 14:11 (NKJV) ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Outer darkness Matthew 25:30 (NKJV) ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 2 Peter 2:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Weeping, wailing & gnashing Matthew 13:49-50 (NKJV) ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Unquenchable fire Mark 9:43-44 (NKJV) ⁴³If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— ⁴⁴[£]where *Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.*'

Everlasting fire with the devil Matthew 25:41 (NKJV) ⁴¹"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

Tormented day and night forever Revelation 20:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where [£] the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Second death Revelation 20:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second [£]death. ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Everlasting punishment Matthew 25:46 (NKJV) ⁴⁶And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

V. Paul speaks of two motivations for pleasing God. Which does he mention first?

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, **to be well pleasing to Him.** ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹**Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;** but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴**For the love of Christ compels us,** because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

VI. A Christian Understands the Wrath of God

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV) ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

1 Peter 1:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, **conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;**

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NKJV) ¹Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Philippians 2:12 (NKJV) ¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;**

Acts 9:31 (NKJV) ³¹Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And **walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit,** they were multiplied.

Hebrews 10:26-31 (NASB) ²⁶For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses.* ²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." ³¹It is a **terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**

Hebrews 12:25-29 (NKJV) ²⁵**See that you do not refuse Him who speaks.** For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ²⁶whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "*Yet once more I ^fshake not only the earth, but also heaven.*"^f ²⁷Now this, "*Yet once more,*" indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we ^fmay serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. ²⁹**For our God is a consuming fire.**

Romans 11:22 (NKJV) ²²Therefore **consider the goodness and severity of God:** on those who fell, severity; but toward you, ^fgoodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

Conclusion: 2 Peter 3:3-7

Mike Yaconelli: (Mars Hill Review, 2 May 1995)

"I don't think there are enough *terrified people* in the church. The church is made up of people who have God all figured out. I am suggesting that the tame God of relevance be replaced by the God whose very presence shatters our egos into dust, burns our sin into ashes, and strips us naked to reveal the real person within. I would like to suggest that the Church become a place of terror again; a place where God continually has to tell us, '*Fear not*'."